

SOUTH AMERICA ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND HEALTH NEWSLETTER

COP 16 Webcast Session: “Clean Energy Technologies for the Developing World”

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REO along with PAO in Lima coordinated a Webcast presentation entitled “Clean Energy Technologies for the Developing World”, one of the side sessions at the Cancun Climate Change Summit on Tuesday December 7, 2010. The session included an interactive Q&A session and a panel dialogue with local experts to comment on the presentations given.

The event stressed the importance of cleaner sources of energy both to promote energy security and independence and also to be used as tools to alleviate poverty and foster development. It raised the questions : what is the optimal environment necessary to create and foster alliances between the private and public sectors and what can governments do to foster a process of innovation, use and promotion of renewable forms of energy?

John Kaniszwsky from Winrock International mentioned the work the company is doing on deploying clean technologies to challenging locations. Some of these projects include solar energy deployment in the Philippines which has allowed CO2 emission reductions of approximately 7,000 MT/year and another one in Nepal on electric cars that started in 2002 and has USAID support.



DCM Bruce Williamson opening the webcast session on Clean Energy Technologies held on December 7, 2010.

Bill Breed from USAID stressed the importance of cost effectiveness in any new clean technology to guarantee a successful implementation. He also highlighted the significance of renewable sources of energy to alleviate poverty mentioning Brazil as an example of how solar technologies applied to rural areas have not only guaranteed energy but also secured economic growth for rural cities and towns. His presentation complements the overall idea of the creation of low carbon communities by applying clean low cost technologies for growth and development.

Peru is promoting the use of cleaner sources of energy as well. About two years ago, the GOP issued regulations to foster investment in energy projects for wind, solar, geothermal and small hydro energy plants. As a result of this process there are currently a number of projects that include wind and solar energy generation that will start next year and supply the country's electric grid with 500 MW of energy. Local Peruvian experts stressed the need to reinforce activities and policies to promote renewable energies taking advantage of the vast natural resources of the country. They also mentioned that further debate should be promoted in the development of biofuels so as to guarantee sustainable development of this sector with minimum environmental impact on forestry resources (Palm Oil) and Water availability (Sugar cane).

Suriname: Carbon Laboratorium at Bergendal

A carbon laboratorium where research will be done to measure the existence of carbon in the soil and trees will be built in January 2011. With this research it will be clear how much the Surinamese forest is worth. Because of the existence of carbon in the forest it will get a financial value in the world. According to John Goedschalk, project coordinator, measuring will be done at ten locations, by which the CO-2 value of the area will be known. All data will be put into a database for the government. There will also be an educational unit where tourists, students and others can learn about the carbon existence in the soil and forest. Partners in this project are Conservation International, Iamgold, Kersten and the Center for Agricultural Research in Suriname-CELOS.

Source: De Ware Tijd. Summary prepared by U.S. Embassy Paramaribo Ingrid Hill, for Daily Press Summary dated December 23, 2010.

Chile: Water Shortage In Chiles North Prompts Pioneering Desalination Projects

By Dominique Farrell



In Combarbalá, northern Chile, the lack of water affects basic needs. With a rainfall deficit and dried-up wells, simple yet essential tasks such as washing dishes and showering have become a challenge.

Although authorities are working on the construction of four reservoirs, for now, a truck delivers water every seven or eight days. And in a place where most people earn a living from agriculture, the current drought means work is getting harder to come by.

But access to potable water it not a problem unique to Chile. According to UN studies, less than one percent of the world's water can be consumed immediately.

To help deal with the issue, some countries have begun desalinating (removing salt and minerals) seawater. And in Chile — a country with a wealth of seawater from its long Pacific coastline — several pioneering salt-to-freshwater projects are in the works.

Starting in 2014, Antofagasta and Mejillones - in far northern Chile - will be the first South American cities whose entire supply of drinking water will come from desalinated seawater.

Aguas Antofagasta is in charge of the project. Marcos Kútuas, general manager of the company, said that the desalination plant will cost US\$60 million and will produce 1,000 liters of water per second. The project will add a second plant to the one currently operating and supplying desalinated seawater to 65 percent of Antofagasta's 400,000 inhabitants. Even more projects are expected to be replicated in the north of the country.

All these initiatives add to the recent promise by President Sebastian Piñera to build a desalination plant in Arica. Loreto Silva, Chile's Undersecretary of Public Works, confirmed this week that the government and the World Bank are now assessing the nation's water situation. "The results will define the government's policy to encourage efficient use of water, generate new sources of water (such as desalination plants) and improve the government's agency charged with monitoring the situation - Chile's Water Department (DGA)," she said.

Antofagasta will also host the Latin American Association of Desalination this year. The Association is a group of nine international companies that seek to promote, protect and develop the desalination of sea water intended for human consumption and industrial use in the mining and agriculture sectors.

Read more at: <http://www.santiagotimes.cl/news/environmental/20369-water-shortage-in-chiles-north-prompts-pioneering-desalination-projects>

Brazil will Intensify Repression Against Biopiracy

Brazil will intensify repression against companies patenting products made of plants and rare animals without rendering a fair compensation to the country or its native communities.

Fight against biopiracy has support from native communities and protectors of the Amazon Rainforest, who say that corporations make profit from drugs and other derived products from Brazilian exotic plants, poisonous cobras or colorful frogs in an unfair manner.

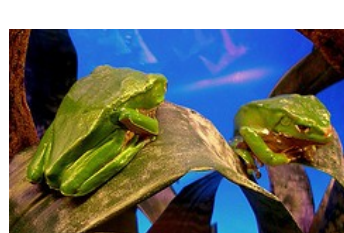
On the other hand, this initiative was criticized because for detractor it would delay the scientific research and attempt against companies that could develop environmental sustainable activities.

According to Bruno Barbosa, General Supervision Coordinator of the Brazilian Institute for Environment and Natural Renewable Resources, Brazil applied about 59 million dollars in fines to companies because they failed to pay a fair compensation for using Brazilian-native genetic material, since July 2010. Next year, authorities will constrain companies which did not report the use of local species to create pharmaceutical products to the government, as enforced by law, and fines will probably increase.

As fight against biopiracy is a new process and considering that Brazil has one of the largest biodiversity reserves in the world, Barbosa believes that most of this activity is illegal.

There are many examples of biopiracy. Captopril, the medicine against hypertension, was developed by using cobra poison in the 1970. Cobra poison was originally used by native groups on arrow heads.

Pharmaceutical companies used also Kambô frog from Acre to produce anti-inflammatory drugs, and did not pay profits to local inhabitants, Barbosa pointed out.



Many of these incidents occurred before a law issued in 2001 which set forth the regulation in force to use species.

This year, the government implemented an anti-biopiracy effort by means of a campaign called “New Rumors Operation” addressed to constrain the exploration gap.

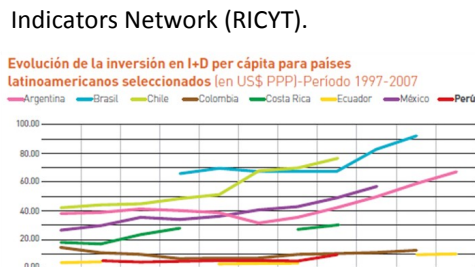
Read more at: http://www.correiodeestado.com.br/noticias/brasil-vai-intensificar-repressao-a-biopirataria-em-2011_91985/

Peru: The Sluggishness of Science and Technology

By George Simmons

At the CADE (Annual Business Conference) of this year, Ismael Benavides, Minister of Economy and Finance of Peru, made a comment, that although debatable, makes perfect economic sense: “It would have been better to have a ministry of innovation and technology rather than a culture one”. Indeed, according to a study by Peruvian researcher Francisco Sagasti, called *Strengthening of the National System of Science, Technology, and Innovation (CTI) in Peru*, investments made in research and development have high economic and social profitability, which can reach between 60% to 80% rates of return both in developed and developing nations.

What attracts attention is the fact that Peru, with an accumulated growth of 60% between 2001 and 2009, has invested in 2009 only 0.15% of its GDP on science, technology, and innovation activities, while Brazil invested 1.11% and Chile 0.67%, according to a study from the Science and Technology Indicators Network (RICYT).



Thus, it becomes evident that there is not any relationship between macroeconomic achievements and investment on science, technology, and innovation. Yet, it seems that this sluggishness is a situation that has become almost sort of a tradition in Peru: to defer scientific efforts.

Image: Courtesy of Semana Economica.

Read more at: <http://semanaeconomica.com/ediciones/1252/notas/61977-divulguese-e-investiguese>

REO Hub and ESTH Outreach

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| Jan 3-6, 2011 | ECPA Specialist Dr. Galloway visits Lima to discuss water resource management. |
| Jan 3-7, 2011 | International Summer Science Summit. Lima-Peru. |

Feb 9-12, 2011	International Congress “Environment and Society. National, Regional, and International Approach to <i>Climate Change</i> ”, Cusco-Peru.
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March, 2011	19th Caribbean Geological Conference in Guadeloupe.
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The information contained herein was gathered from news sources from across the region, and the views expressed below do not necessarily reflect those of the Regional Environmental HUB Office or of our constituent posts.

Addressees interested in sharing any ESTH-related events of USG interest are welcome to do so. For questions or comments, please contact us at quevedoa@state.gov.